



Woolston School

MLE CASE STUDY

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Schools all around the country are embarking on new and innovative teaching and learning approaches to respond to the major shifts in the use of technologies and the way students are learning. This publication is one of a series which aims to showcase how schools are keeping up with the pace of change throughout the world. This case study looks at Woolston School in Christchurch.

WOOLSTON SCHOOL is a decile two school which caters for years 1–8 (age 5 to 13). It has six bilingual classes taught in either Māori or Samoan. It has 330 students; ethnic composition is 48% Māori, 34% NZ European, 10% Samoan, 8% other. The school operates out of a mix of older and newer buildings. Years 1–2 and the bilingual classes are now located in newly established relocatable buildings which are open teaching spaces and an example of modern learning environments. Years 3–5 are located in a learning studio style block which has four teaching spaces that open into a common space and years 6–8 are located in 1970s blocks which are single cell teaching spaces.



Inspiration for change

While teaching out of old 1970s single cell blocks, teaching staff, led by the principal began to reflect on how to raise student achievement and provide the best academic experience for all students. They researched and visited other schools, challenging the traditional model by asking “how could we get different results by using a different model?” They realised they needed to develop a programme that was more focussed on the individual learner. Teachers were empowered to think ‘outside the box’, come up with new ideas about how to do things smarter and trial new approaches – always with the goals in mind of improving best practice, raising achievement and focussing on the individual learner.

The journey

At meetings, staff would regularly discuss their ideas. As the ideas began to flow, motivation and enthusiasm increased. Initially, two teachers moved into the same teaching space and began trialling these ideas. At staff meetings they would provide feedback on what worked and any lessons learned. Teachers began to learn from each other by watching, discussing and working more closely in teams. Over time they began to encourage each other to do things differently. More collaborative style teaching and individual student learning started to take place across the school. As teachers’ motivation grew, so did the motivation and enthusiasm of students who were learning from the new working practices of the teachers.

And now...

The establishment of the studio block in 2010, an open plan bilingual block in 2013 and the new modern learning block in 2014 has helped support and contribute to a modern, flexible, open and collaborative approach to teaching and learning. Teachers using the single cell blocks are experimenting by sharing teaching space, team teaching, using cloakroom space as a break out area, creative use of furniture and outdoor spaces for teaching and learning. Students in the single cell blocks are using 1:1 Google Chrome book devices to collaborate with students and staff outside of their classes through the use of modern technology. There is movement away from space ‘ownership’ within the school to spaces being shared. The old style of one desk per student has gone in most classes. Teaching spaces now have a range of different furniture to meet the needs of all students. Students are motivated, excited about learning and have helped with the design of spaces and layout of furniture. It is too early to understand the impact on achievement, but the principal is confident that the results will show significant improvement.

“I believe that in order for our students to be successful in achieving their goals we must form a cooperative partnership between home and school.” JANEANE REID, PRINCIPAL, WOOLSTON SCHOOL



“ Students are highly engaged in their learning. They can talk confidently about their learning, their goals for improvement and what they need to do to achieve these goals. ”

WOOLSTON SCHOOL EDUCATION
REVIEW OFFICE REPORT, 2012



Lessons:

- Don't be afraid to try new things. Know that often things won't be right from day one but ensuring teachers are able to reflect on what worked and what didn't helps to improve
- It is important to always keep an open mind and to be flexible to change to continuously improve
- A collaborative approach helps to better understand students' needs and helps us to respond by providing access to the right teachers and/or other resources
- The traditional teaching style is often less productive in terms of teaching as more time is spent managing other students or students can spend time being taught something they already know
- Knowing the individual goals and learning pathways of each student allows us to respond to their needs
- Moving from a paper based to a fully electronic system allows staff to input students' progress, individual lessons etc anytime, anywhere on any device. Other staff members can also access that information at any time

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To create independent, life long learners and develop individual potential through an effective, caring learning environment where the community learns and grows together.

OUR SCHOOL MOTTO

*Learning and Growing Together
Me Ako Tahi me Mahi Tahi Tatou*

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Dream It... Believe It... Achieve It...

<http://woolston.school.nz>

For more information on modern learning environments visit www.mle.education.govt.nz